# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
# DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL PLANNING
# BIOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS ANALYSIS

## REPORT GUIDELINES

### Purpose

The Department of Regional Planning is now requiring a community-level Biological Constraints Analysis as part of the Initial Study environmental review process whenever a proposed development project is to be located, totally or in part, within a Significant Ecological Area (SEA), in an Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA), in a SEA Buffer or in any other sensitive environmental resources defined in the County Zoning Code.

This new Analysis is intended to provide a first technical identification and community-level assessment of the biological resources and sensitivities both on the site and in the surrounding area. It will be a broad scope, comprehensive survey drawing from the literature and on-site investigations. An evaluation of the long-term stability of the ecosystems will be provided emphasizing key, indicator species. Quantitative data gathering may be requested for certain selected resources.

The Analysis will serve as a prescription for any future, full Biota Report required by the Department in connection with projects in SEAs or ESHAs. It is intended that the identification of biotic constraints be completed by the applicant prior to project design. This will assist in creating a project with the greatest environmental sensitivity and may potentially reduce the need for extensive project revisions after submittal.

### Outline of the Biological Constraints Analysis

This report will be structured very much like the "Setting" and "General Biota Survey" sections of the Biota Report referred to above. All Biological Constraints Analysis reports must contain two sections, one entitled "Characteristics of the Site" and the other "Characteristics of the Surrounding Area". The minimum contents of these sections are detailed in the highlighted sections below.

A thorough review of scientific literature is essential. This will include, but not be limited to, a review of biota reports completed as part of nearby development permit applications. A field reconnaissance is necessary to the extent that observable/potential features require more detailed study for refinement and verification. If sensitive resources are known or suspected to occur on the project site, a commitment to have the resources studied by the appropriate specialists will be required.

## Characteristics of the Site

Since this is the preliminary specific analysis of the site biota, it must include the broadest scope of information. Even the slightest indication or probability of existence of biotic resources requires mention of that possibility.

1. Describe the project site (all maps and photos must be of a scale on which clear, understandable information can be shown and must have site boundaries accurately delineated)
2. Identify watershed boundaries and drainage patterns
3. Identify unusual and significant landform and geologic features
4. Plot location of major plant communities
5. Describe, in general, site habitats and associations in relation to soil types, and discuss their significance
6. Provide a list of species anticipated on the site based on field observations, CNDDB, and any other appropriate data bases
7. Provide rough estimates of the population sizes of flora and fauna on the project site

## Characteristics of the Surrounding Area

Facts about the biological conditions on neighboring properties are necessary to provide a portrait of how the subject property fits into important habitat patterns in the area. The expanse of area to be studied outside the site will depend on the consulting biologist's opinion of the degree and importance of the interrelationship.

1. Describe existing land uses in the neighborhood (include proposed and approved development, and lands in the public domain)
2. Identify habitats, associations and vegetative communities
3. Identify open space reserves in the area
4. Identify actual or potential wildlife movement and gene flow between surrounding open space to/through the subject property
5. Describe overall biological value of the area (include diversity, special interest populations, etc.)
6. Provide rough estimates of the overall population sizes of species of flora and fauna in the range of which the subject property is a part
7. Describe how the site relates to or represents the biotic mosaic of the surrounding area. EXAMPLES: Is it at the edge of a habitat type? Is it within a potential wildlife movement corridor? Is it the last remnant of a certain type of flora?

**Other Required Documents**

In addition to the narrative, the following maps and photos are required and should be suitably located or referenced to reinforce points made in the narrative.

- Original, color USGS Quad Sheet
- Color, vertical air photo
- Color, oblique air photo
- Color site photography, including panoramas and low level oblique air or off-site photos
- Small scale site topographic map of the site

To be retained as a permanent record in the case file, all such maps and photos must be arranged to fit into standard legal size file folders. Because the documents must be small scale to be useful, durable folding techniques may be employed to assure proper filing and long life.

**NOTE:** In an effort to be environmentally sensitive, all biota documents should be double-sided and preferably be printed on recycled paper.

ADOPTED BY SEATAC & ERB: November 8, 1993